

26 The People as a Factor in Government.

to the problem of how to establish a popular government. Even in the "Prince," in which his aim is "to show how monarchies may be governed and preserved," he emphasises the importance of the people as a factor in government. I do not know that under "the people" he embraces the whole mass of the population—plebs as well as *populus*. In his "History of Florence," at all events, he has nothing but contempt for democracy in the widest sense, and limits political rights to the "popolari"—the middle and upper lower classes. In the "Discourses" he calmly assumes that the Parliament of Paris is the French people! Of the people, in the limited sense at least, he is the enthusiastic admirer. In this respect he contrasts very favourably with Guicciardini, who, though no lover of tyrants, holds the people in contempt. "To speak of the people is to speak of madmen, for the people is a monster full of confusion and error, and its vain beliefs are as far from truth as is Spain from India according to Ptolemy." Machiavelli is the staunch opponent of such wholesale depreciation. Even in the "Prince" the people appears as an important factor in government. In the case of a prince who holds his throne in virtue of election (*del principato civili*, ch. 9), popular election is, he holds, a better guarantee of power than election by the few (the nobility). In either case it is essential that this type of prince should cultivate the goodwill of the people, for the devotion of the people can alone secure him against the machinations of the nobles, who are prone to conspiracy. From this point of view he combats the saying, that "he that builds on the people builds on the sand." "If the prince that builds on the people knows how to command, if he be a man of courage and not prone to be unnerved by adversity, nor be wanting in his preparations, and keep the mass under the spell of his spirit and his commands, he shall not find them fail him, and ultimately it will appear that he has built on a good foundation." Let the prince so act at all times that the people may learn to value his personality and regard it as essential to their wellbeing, and he may rest assured of their fidelity. The power of the prince, thus depends on the goodwill of the people, though the people may have no active share in the government. This is a sane judgment, and shows that Machiavelli's prince, even when though